

# Patuxent Research Refuge

## *Release of Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan*

### Greetings from Patuxent Research Refuge!

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service, we) is pleased to announce the release of a draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and Environmental Assessment (EA) for Patuxent Research Refuge for public review and comment. Once final, this plan will guide refuge management over the next 15 years.

In this newsletter, we summarize the three different management alternatives we evaluated for the refuge. We also explain how you can obtain and comment on the draft CCP/EA and provide details about upcoming public meetings.

### Comprehensive Conservation Planning

In 1997, Congress passed the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act requiring the Service to prepare CCPs for each national wildlife refuge. A CCP is a 15-year strategic plan guiding management for all refuge programs. CCPs will be revised at least every 15 years, or sooner if significant new information becomes available or conditions change.



Steve Maslowski/USFWS

Woodthrush



Fall at Patuxent Research Refuge

USFWS

### The Refuge

The 12,841-acre Patuxent Research Refuge was established in 1936 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt “to effectuate further the purposes of the Migratory Bird Conservation Act” and “to serve as a wildlife experiment and research refuge.”

The refuge is located between Baltimore, Maryland, and Washington, DC—an area with one of the highest densities of development in the United States.

Currently, about 10,000 of the refuge’s acres are forest, but the refuge also consists of grasslands, freshwater marshes, shrub and early successional forest, and open water. It provides important habitat for a variety of migratory birds of conservation concern.

The refuge offers unique opportunities for environmental education and interpretation in an urban setting and is home to the U.S. Geological Survey’s Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, a leading international research institute for

wildlife and applied environmental research.

### Draft Plan Available for Public Review

Refuge and regional Service staff began preparing a CCP for Patuxent Research Refuge in February 2010.

The draft CCP/EA is now available for public review and comment until November 23, 2012.

### Management Alternatives Considered

The draft CCP/EA describes, in detail, three possible management alternatives for Patuxent Research Refuge. Each alternative aims to achieve the refuge’s purposes, vision, and goals. Brief descriptions of the three alternatives are detailed below. Complete descriptions of each alternative are provided in chapter 3 of the draft CCP/EA. A detailed analysis of the potential impacts resulting from implementation of each alternative is provided in chapter 4 of the draft plan.



### Alternative A - Current Management

This alternative describes our current management priorities and activities at the refuge. It serves as a baseline for comparing and contrasting alternatives B and C.

**Habitat Management:** Under alternative A, we would continue to manage for and maintain a diversity of habitats, including:

- 8,300 acres of upland forest
- 2,775 acres of floodplain forest and associated wetlands
- 516 acres of grasslands
- 68 riparian miles of river and stream habitat
- 61 impoundments
- 50 acres of savannah

For all of the habitat types, we would continue to control and reduce nonnative invasive species and conduct baseline surveys and monitoring of management actions and wildlife populations.

**Visitor Services:** The refuge would continue to:

- Support the six priority public uses - environmental education and interpretation, hunting, fishing, and wildlife observation and photography.
- Maintain all existing public use facilities and programs.
- Allow appropriate, compatible non-wildlife-dependent uses including horseback riding, jogging, bicycling, cross-country skiing, and dog walking.

### Alternative B - Forest Restoration and Mixed Public Use (*Service-preferred*)

Alternative B is the Service-preferred alternative because it combines the actions we believe would best achieve the refuge's purposes, vision, and goals; respond to key issues; and support species of conservation concern.

**Habitat Management:** This alternative emphasizes the management of specific refuge habitats to support species of conservation concern in the Chesapeake Bay region. We would:

- Restore 478 acres of impoundments and grasslands to forest to benefit forest interior-dwelling species.
- Improve and expand our inventory and monitoring efforts to better understand the effectiveness of habitat management, habitat adaptation to climate change, and species composition and utilization.
- Increase savannah habitat up to 135 acres to support species such as the rare darkling beetle.
- Restore impaired stream segments.

**Visitor Services:** Under alternative B, we would increase wildlife-dependent public use opportunities:

- Promote higher quality hunting and fishing programs.
- Create two new trails and a new observation tower to expand wildlife observation, viewing,

and photography opportunities.

- Initiate new interpretive programs and environmental education opportunities.

We would also allow some appropriate, compatible non-wildlife-dependent uses such as virtual geocaching and waterfowl-related dog training.

### Alternative C - Maximize Forest Interior Restoration and Emphasize Wildlife-dependent Public Uses

**Habitat Management:** Alternative C would focus on maximizing interior forest habitat by restoring 767 acres of impoundments and grassland to forest that would support forest interior-dwelling species, in addition to other species of conservation concern.

**Visitor Services:** Alternative C focuses on wildlife-dependent public uses while minimizing non-wildlife-dependent uses:

- Expand wildlife observation, viewing, and photography opportunities.
- Reduce the number of special events and interpretive programming.
- Eliminate the January hunt season with the exception of firearms season for deer.
- Explore the implementation of a recreational use fee.
- Eliminate certain non-wildlife-dependent public uses such as horseback riding and dog walking and training.



Fishing at Wounded Military Visitation Day

## Patuxent Research Refuge Draft Goals

**Goal 1:** Maintain and actively promote Patuxent Research Refuge as an “outdoor laboratory,” providing a diversity of wildlife and natural resource research opportunities on the refuge. Research that supports the overall Service mission, and evaluates the best methods for protecting natural resources throughout the Refuge System and other land management agencies will be a priority.

**Goal 2:** Protect, maintain, and restore, where possible, the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of forested ecological communities to provide habitat for species of conservation concern, including migratory birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles, and invertebrates.

**Goal 3:** Protect, maintain, and restore, where possible, the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of refuge aquatic habitats, located within the Patuxent, Little Patuxent, and Anacostia River watersheds, and impoundments, to provide habitat for species of conservation concern, including fish, invertebrates, and plants.

**Goal 4:** Manage refuge non-forested upland communities to provide ecological structure, composition, and function to support native plants and wildlife, including species of conservation concern. Where appropriate, restore the biological integrity and diversity of these habitats.

**Goal 5:** Provide high-quality recreation, environmental education, and interpretive programs to enhance refuge visitors' understanding and appreciation of fish and wildlife conservation.

**Goal 6:** Provide high-quality hunting and fishing experiences for hunters and anglers.

**Goal 7:** Enhance partnerships with local communities and various organizations to garner support and promote refuge programs and resources.

### Public Meetings

Please consider attending one of the upcoming public meetings about the draft CCP/EA for Patuxent Research Refuge.

At each meeting, we will give a short presentation on the draft plan, followed by an open house. Attendees will have opportunities to speak directly with the planning team and provide comments on the plan. We will record all of the comments and suggestions from the meeting.

#### October 22, 2012

6:30-8:30 p.m.

National Wildlife Visitor Center  
10901 Scarlet Tanager Loop  
Laurel, MD 20708

#### October 23, 2012

10 a.m.-12 p.m.

Chesapeake Bay Field Office  
177 Admiral Cochrane Drive  
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Service is committed to providing access to these meetings for all participants. Please direct all requests for sign language interpreting services, close captioning, or other accommodation needs should contact refuge staff

at 301/497-5763 or the Federal Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339. Requests for accommodations should be made at least 5 days in advance.

### How to Obtain a Draft Plan and Provide Comments

You may view and download the draft CCP/EA online: <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/planning/patuxent/ccphome.html>.

To request a hard copy or CD-ROM see the contact information below.

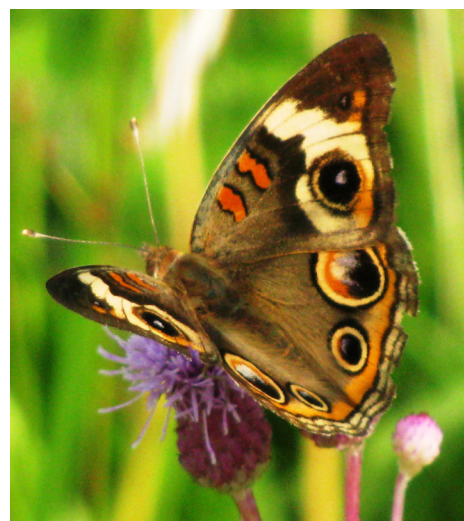
We invite you to share your comments about the draft plan in writing or at our public meetings (see below). We will accept letters, faxes, phone calls, and emails. To be considered, all comments must be received or postmarked by November 23, 2012.

Email: [northeastplanning@fws.gov](mailto:northeastplanning@fws.gov)  
(Please put “Patuxent CCP” in subject line)

Mail: Bill Perry  
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Phone: 413/253-8688

Fax: 413/253-8468



Buckeye - USFWS



Cerulean Warbler - Ohio DNR

**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**  
<http://www.fws.gov>  
1 800/ 344 WILD

**Federal Relay Service for the  
Deaf or Hard of Hearing**  
1 800/877 8339  
October2012



## Patuxent Research Refuge Vision Statement

Positioned near the center of the Baltimore-Washington Corridor, Patuxent Research Refuge is an island of green within a sea of urban development. This large, contiguous block of forest and wetlands provides a unique opportunity for wildlife research on a landscape and local scale in a natural setting. The refuge and our partners interpret the results of research for the visiting public as a way of connecting people with the natural world. As the first national wildlife refuge established for both wildlife, and research and the home of the U.S. Geological Survey's Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, staff and partners are able to conduct cutting-edge wildlife research and passionate interpretation of the natural world in the shadows of protected historic and cultural resources. The North Tract and the National Wildlife Visitor Center provide opportunities for local children, national decision-makers, and the general public from around the world to develop a conservation ethic and learn about the refuge, the National Wildlife Refuge System, and the importance of science and the benefits that green spaces provide to wildlife and people. Patuxent Research Refuge fosters a sense of connection to natural resources for visitors, researchers, and decision-makers while providing a natural corridor for species that migrate naturally or that may need to move in response to future climatic changes. Pieced together from a variety of past uses and owners, this important component of the green infrastructure of the mid-Atlantic provides improved air and water quality for the surrounding area, connects people with the natural world, and allows for conservation at a landscape scale.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
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Refuge Planning  
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